

## **Santa Fe National Forest Travel Management Planning**

### **Final List of Issues and Concerns from Scoping**

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/s/ Julie Bain, Travel Management Project Leader

#### ***Background***

The Forest Supervisor published a notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement in the *Federal Register* on July 17, 2008. The publication of the notice marked the beginning of the scoping period, which lasted until September 2, 2008. A scoping period's purpose is to "determin[e] the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to the proposed action" (40 CFR Section 1501.7). This document lists the significant issues that formed the basis of the alternatives, the concerns analyzed in detail, and the concerns not analyzed in detail.

The interdisciplinary team's process for analyzing the comments is described in the document titled "Content Analysis Methodology" dated April 9, 2009. The draft environmental impact statement updates the numbers of letters and comments described in the April 2009 document.

#### ***Legal Framework for Identifying and Considering Issues***

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) directs agencies to make environmental impact statements "analytic rather than encyclopedic" (40 CFR 1502.2(a)). To achieve this aim, CEQ directs agencies to focus on the significant issues related to the proposed action, and de-emphasize those that are not:

40 CFR 1500.4:

Agencies shall reduce excessive paperwork by: ... Discussing only briefly issues other than significant ones ...(c)

Using the scoping process not only to identify significant environmental issues deserving of study, but also to deemphasize insignificant issues, narrowing the scope of the environmental impact statement process accordingly ...(g)).

40 CFR 1501.7:

As part of the scoping process the lead agency shall: ...Determine the scope ... and the significant issues to be analyzed in depth in the environmental impact statement. ... (40 CFR 1501.7(a)(2))

Identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues which are not significant or which have been covered by prior environmental review (1506.3), narrowing the discussion of these issues in the statement to a brief presentation of why they will not have a significant effect on the human

environment or providing a reference to their coverage elsewhere (40 CFR 1501.7(a)(3)).

The interdisciplinary team identified 5 significant issues that formed the basis of the alternatives, 14 concerns that did not drive alternatives but needed to be analyzed in the draft environmental impact statement, and a number of concerns not analyzed in detail.

### ***Significant Issues***

Forest Service Manual 1909.15 gives interdisciplinary teams this guidance on issues:

“Issues serve to highlight effects or unintended consequences that may occur from the proposed action and alternatives, giving opportunities during the analysis to reduce adverse effects and compare trade-offs for the decisionmaker and public to understand. Issues are best identified during scoping early in the process to help set the scope of the actions, alternatives, and effects to consider; but, due to the iterative nature of the NEPA process, additional issues may come to light at any time” (FSM 1909.15(12.4)).

The Forest’s interdisciplinary team and steering committee revised the issues and concerns several times during the formulation of the alternatives and effects analysis.

The interdisciplinary team considered a significant issue to be one that could not be resolved with a mitigation, that would result in a vastly different proposal, and would show tradeoffs when all resources were considered. The Forest Supervisor approved of these 5 significant issues, which formed the basis of the alternatives to the Proposed Action:

1. Continued public motorized use of routes and areas described in the proposed action will adversely affect forest resources. These effects include:
  - Erosion, soil compaction, and degradation of water quality and watershed condition;
  - Degradation of fish and wildlife habitat;
  - Damage to cultural resource sites;
  - Damage to traditional cultural properties;
  - Spread of invasive plant species;
  - Damage to rare plants; and
  - Compromising the character of wilderness and inventoried roadless areas.
2. The reduction in miles of routes and the prohibition on cross-country travel described in the proposed action will adversely affect the quantity of public motorized experiences because the proposed action:
  - Lacks enough loops and connectors to provide for longer rides;
  - Lacks diverse opportunities for all-terrain vehicles, motorcycles, and 4x4s;
  - Lacks diverse routes for different skill levels;
  - Restricts access to traditional cultural properties;
  - Does not provide enough area for motorcycle *trials*;
  - Closes too many routes, which will concentrate use and take away the semi-primitive aspect of riding in the forest; and
  - Does not plan for the future growth in motorized sports.

3. Prohibiting motorized cross-country travel will limit the retrieval of big game, perhaps to an unacceptable level.
4. Designating motorized dispersed camping corridors will increase cross-country travel and the resource damage associated with it, or curtail the kind of unrestricted camping that the Santa Fe National Forest currently provides.
5. The proposed action, by designating routes uniformly across the forest outside of designated Wilderness, will cause conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users because they will be recreating in the same vicinity.

### ***Concerns Analyzed in Detail in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement***

The interdisciplinary team identified 14 concerns that warrant detailed analysis in the draft environmental impact statement but did not form the basis of an alternative. The team analyzed these concerns in detail because they are within the scope of the project and not covered by other environmental review.

6. Designating routes close to private property may increase incidents of trespass on private land.
7. Motorized travel causes fugitive dust and vehicle emissions that are harmful to human health and contribute to climate change.
8. Designating routes to or motorized dispersed camping close to private property limits recreational opportunities and encourages trespass.
9. The motor vehicle use map (MVUM) alone will be an inadequate enforcement tool.
10. Any reasonable designated motorized trail system will require more maintenance than the Forest Service can provide by itself. An unmaintained system will continue to adversely affect Forest resources.
11. Closing routes to motorized use could affect visual quality.
12. Reducing the miles of roads and trails could decrease the amount of motorized recreation on the Forest, resulting in negative economic impacts.
13. Motorized routes in the Santa Fe National Forest could result in undesirable noise, affecting those who visit the National Forest and surrounding areas.
14. Motorized routes in the Santa Fe National Forest could affect property values for lands adjacent to the Forest.
15. Reducing the miles of routes for motorized use in the Santa Fe National Forest could impact the cultural practices and traditions by limiting opportunity for traditional activities on the Forest.
16. The designation of routes for motorized use in the Santa Fe National Forest could result in a disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effect on minority populations and low-income populations.
17. Not including motorized trails in the forest's open road density standards, and not including all routes whether open or closed in the standards, is not protective of forest resources. The current open road density standards in the forest plan are too high and do not protect forest resources.
18. Motorized use of the forest increases the risk of wildfire starts.
19. The proposed action restricts motorized access to hunting and fishing opportunities, as well as forest product collection.

***Concerns Not Analyzed in Detail in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement***

Forest personnel believe that every concern raised has merit and is important. Some, like those below, do not fit into this analysis, are already decided by some other authority, or need to be taken up later in the travel management planning process. The interdisciplinary team did not analyze the concerns in this section in detail for the reasons shown below.

***Already Part of the Proposed Action***

“Storing” roads instead of decommissioning them will allow the Forest Service to better handle future designations as the use of off-highway vehicles increases and more access is needed.

*Response:* We interpret “storing” roads to mean that roads are closed to motorized use, but allowed to continue in existence without being used. Then, at some future date, the Forest may allow motorized users on the road, depending on conditions at that time. This suggestion is already part of the proposed action. Because no *physical decommissioning*—eliminating the road from existence—will occur under this proposed action, all the roads closed to motorized use will be “stored.” This will happen under any of the alternatives. It is important to remember, however, that the existence of a road can cause environmental impacts, whether the road is used or not. In any future decisions regarding storing or physically decommissioning roads, we will need to balance the benefits of storing the road against the impact that the road may have.

The proposed action will effectively manage motorized recreation on the Santa Fe National Forest.

*Response:* The Santa Fe National Forest welcomes the positive feedback, and agrees that the Travel Management Rule is a step toward effectively managing motorized travel on the forest. We hope that the alternatives will similarly provide a balance between motorized access and resource protection. Designating routes and areas and publishing the motor vehicle use map are only the first steps in this process. As we gain more experience managing motorized use on the forest, we can make changes to the designations and the map to keep up with changing use patterns.

***Addressed Through Implementation of Standards, Guidelines, or Best Management Practices in the Forest Plan***

Roads on private property increase the road density in that management area.

*Response:* Roads on private property surrounded by the forest do technically increase the number of roads in that management area, but the Forest Service does not include them in its open road density calculations since the Forest Service has no control over roads on private property. The Forest Plan, which governs the method for calculating open road density, does not apply to private property.

Closing roads during times of high fire danger and limiting dispersed camping will help to prevent vehicle-caused fires and ensure the safety of the forest.

*Response:* The Santa Fe National Forest restricts use of the forest as fire danger increases. In recent years, we have closed the forest to everyone during times of high fire danger. The Travel Management Rule does not prevent the Forest from closing routes during times of high fire danger.

Clarifying how road density is calculated in the DEIS would provide the public with a better understanding of the travel management process.

*Response:* The Forest Plan guides how road density is calculated. The draft environmental impact statement or the project record will clarify how road density is calculated.

*Already decided by law, regulation, or policy*

Reducing routes will prevent senior citizens and people with handicaps from being able to have a good, quality experience on the national forest.

*Response:* Senior citizens and people with disabilities will be able to drive on the same routes and areas as everyone else. The Santa Fe National Forest believes that its designated system will provide a quality experience for all visitors. The Travel Management Rule does not provide for preferential treatment of one group over another.

Compliance with other regulations, laws, and agreements and considering suggestions by other agencies will result in a successful system that balances recreation and ensures a successful process.

*Response:* The Santa Fe National Forest is dedicated to seeking out other agencies and accepting their input during the travel management process. City, state, and Federal agencies have provided comments and input during the process. Laws and regulations applicable to the travel management process have been identified and will be addressed throughout the process.

Creating a true range of alternatives will ensure a fair process and provide the Forest Service with enough information to make an informed decision.

*Response:* The Santa Fe National Forest agrees that a range of alternatives will help make an informed decision. The National Environmental Policy Act and the associated regulations state that the alternatives are “the heart of the environmental impact statement.” The scoping process is part of the process used to identify the alternatives. While the regulations do not specify the number of alternatives to analyze, the Forest will identify a reasonable range of alternatives for analysis.

Providing site-specific management plans for all routes will protect the forest.

*Response:* The Santa Fe National Forest has specific management plans for all routes. These are called road management objectives and trail management objectives, and they are meant to track and plan maintenance.

Being influenced by a single group will negatively affect the environmental process.

*Response:* The Santa Fe National Forest is committed to a fair and balanced process, and has listened to all sides and opinions equally.

Banning off-highway vehicles from national forest land will protect resources.

*Response:* The Santa Fe National Forest is not considering a ban on off-highway vehicles from forest land. All kinds of use by humans have the potential to damage forest resources, but banning all uses would not be practical. People use vehicles to get to and around the forest. People who ride horses in the wilderness areas use trailers to get their horses to the wilderness areas. People who hike with their

dogs drive to the trailheads. People who ski at the Santa Fe Ski Basin drive up the mountain. People who camp drive to the campsites. Very few people use the forest without using motor vehicles. The Travel Management Rule recognizes that off-highway vehicles are a legitimate use of the forest.

Closing routes will restrict access for emergency crews to put out fires.

*Response:* Closing routes will not restrict emergency vehicles' access. The Travel Management Rule specifically exempts emergency vehicles of any kind by allowing them to travel on routes not on the motor vehicle use map.

The travel management process does not address snowmobile access during seasonal closures.

*Response:* The Travel Management Rule leaves the choice to regulate snowmobiles up to the individual forest; it is optional. The Santa Fe National Forest did not propose to regulate snowmobiles because the forest does not receive enough snow to consider snowmobile use a problem. If conditions warrant, we may choose to regulate snowmobiles later.

Allowing the public to access private land will create user conflict and encourage trespass.

*Response:* The Travel Management Rule specifically directs the Forest Service to consider rights of access to private property. Designating roads to private property provides legal access to the property owners. That the road is also open to the public is beyond the Forest's control. Many roads and trails on the Santa Fe National Forest cross private property; it is part of owning property in or near public lands. Where appropriate, the Forest has installed signs to indicate that the road or trail crosses private property.

Not designating routes creates de facto wilderness areas which violates national laws.

*Response:* Only Congress has the authority to create wilderness areas. The Santa Fe National Forest will not usurp congressional authority. Prohibiting motor vehicles in some places on the Forest does not create wilderness. Wilderness areas contain many other restrictions on mechanical and motorized equipment.

Alternating closed and open trails throughout the years will reduce negative effects on routes and ensure that those trails can recover from a high volume of use.

*Response:* The Santa Fe National Forest is able to revise its motor vehicle use map on an annual basis, and would do so when conditions warrant.

Requiring OHV users to restrict the noise their machines create will ensure they do not adversely affect other users, residents and sensitive areas of the forest.

*Response:* New Mexico state law already requires OHV vehicles to have mufflers to reduce the level of noise that the machine creates. This applies to all OHV vehicles used on state and public lands. Setting noise limits for OHVs is not within the Forest Service's jurisdiction.

Requiring fees or registration for off-highway vehicle use on the forest will create revenue to fix trails, allow use to be tracked, and correct enforcement and safety issues posed by unregulated off-highway vehicle use on the Santa Fe National Forest.

*Response:* The State of New Mexico has a comprehensive registration system for all motor vehicles. While requiring fees or registration for off-highway vehicles may have financial benefits, the Forest Service does not have authority to charge fees for the use of the forest by off-highway vehicles. Nor does the Forest Service have authority to require vehicle registration, an area that has traditionally been left to the states.

Not designating routes that private property landowners and permittees use will negatively affect their use of the forest.

*Response:* The Santa Fe National Forest is obligated to provide reasonable access to private property. In most cases, this means designating a route to the private property. Forest staff attempted to designate all routes that did not already have an easement to private property. Routes used by permittees (people who have written permits from the Forest Service) are exempt from designations. The written permit will authorize use of specific routes as needed. Finally, the Santa Fe National Forest can add and remove routes from the motor vehicle use map on an annual basis if needed.

Equal treatment for all users on the Santa Fe National Forest will be beneficial for all parties involved.

*Response:* The designation of roads, trails, and areas open to motor vehicle use does not discriminate against any person. All people may use the designated system as it appears on the motor vehicle use map.

Designating only the routes in the proposed action will cause the motorized community to believe that the travel management plan is actually a veiled attempt to eliminate off-highway vehicle use on forest lands.

*Response:* Alternatives that would designate more routes than the Proposed Action have been considered. A big change in managing motorized use on the Santa Fe National Forest will be going from an “open unless closed” policy to a “closed unless open” policy as mandated by the Travel Management Rule. The Rule allows off-highway vehicle use on forest lands, and the Forest Service believes that off-highway vehicle recreation is a legitimate use of forest lands.

Accepting and designating user-created routes causes numerous issues in regards to private property trespass, resource protection, and compliance with laws and regulations.

*Response:* The Santa Fe National Forest intends to designate a motorized system that provides sufficient access to the forest while protecting natural and cultural resources. Most unauthorized trails are a result of having more than half of the forest open to motorized cross-country travel. Some of these trails are in the right places; others are not. Where the routes are in the right places, the Forest considered them in one or more alternatives. Designating motorized trails, rather than being an increase in use, is more a reflection of allowing motorized use in the right places.

Referring to user-created routes as unauthorized, claiming they impact the environment without proper analysis, and not considering them for analysis reduces the motorized opportunities considered during the Travel Management Process.

*Response:* The term “unauthorized” is defined in the Travel Management Rule. The Santa Fe National Forest is using the language from the Rule in order to be consistent with it and reduce confusion. A route being unauthorized does not mean that it cannot become part of the designated system. Forest staff has proposed many unauthorized routes in several alternatives.

Forcing landowners to pay large sums of money for the surveys associated with an easement is unreasonable, especially when the Forest Service is unwilling to perform these same surveys for the roads they are going to make public.

*Response:* The Forest Service is able to designate its existing system roads for public motorized use without completing additional cultural resource clearance (refer to the Travel Management Heritage Programmatic Agreement). In order to *maintain* roads designated for public motorized use, however, the Forest Service completes cultural resource clearance prior to maintenance. Costs associated with meeting cultural resource clearance requirements for roads that lead only to private property, and are used exclusively by the landowner, are generally the responsibility of the landowner.

#### *Beyond the Scope of the Project*

A permanent or portable biomass electric generator station will help the Forest Service in its conservation efforts.

*Response:* A permanent or portable biomass generator may help the Forest Service in its conservation efforts, but electricity generation is not part of this proposed action. Biomass generation uses timber that cannot be sold for other uses, for example, leftover parts of trees from timber sales. This same material can be put to other uses; on many projects, we grind the material and scatter it across the forest floor. The material is not wasted.

The Forest Service needs to continue fire restoration efforts in the Cerro Grande fire region.

*Response:* This proposed action is about travel management and not restoration of the Cerro Grande area. Over the past 9 years, however, the Santa Fe National Forest and other agencies have done a tremendous amount of restoration in the Cerro Grande fire region. The work includes aerial seeding, installing wattles, placing logs along contours, and scattering straw. In addition, the Forest built structures in drainages to handle the increased overland water flow resulting from the fire, and rehabilitation work continues on the Los Alamos reservoir.

Developing and explaining the process for the annual review of the motor vehicle use map now, during the NEPA analysis, will allow the public to understand how future needs for motorized access will be addressed and ensure that the Forest Service will be able to address this issue.

*Response:* Forest staff has been working on the analysis required to publish the first motor vehicle use map, and has not focused on how subsequent reviews would occur. It is too early to set a definitive process for annual reviews, but this idea should be examined more closely closer to implementation.

Removing invasive plant species would reduce erosion and allow native grasses to thrive.

*Response:* Invasive plant species are a concern the Forest Service addresses as part of its conservation efforts. We have an active program to control weeds. In regards to travel management, active weed control is outside the scope of the proposed action. The spread of invasive weeds, however, is included in the effects analysis.

La Cueva Cave should be studied for its cultural significance.



*Response:* Studying caves for their cultural significance is not part of the travel management process and is outside the scope of the proposed action. There are many caves on the Santa Fe National Forest. Forest archaeologists monitor those they know about to ensure their continued integrity, but have no plans to study any particular cave.

Publishing and providing maps for different types of recreation will help the Forest Service alleviate perceived user conflict and ensure quality experiences for all users.

*Response:* The Santa Fe National Forest developed Alternative 5 to address the key issue of user conflict. Publishing different maps for different types of recreation might also be helpful, but is out of the scope of this project, which focuses only on motorized use.

Signs marking private property will prevent trespass and ensure that there is no conflict between private landowners and the public.

*Response:* Installing signs to mark private property is outside of the scope of this project. Where appropriate, however, the Forest Service installs signs to inform drivers that the road is entering private property. Property owners also bear responsibility to protect their property. The Forest Service works with the property owners to minimize conflicts.

Signing trails with information on skill level, vehicle type, and seasonal restrictions will help to enforce the designated motorized system.

*Response:* The motor vehicle use map will depict where, what kind, and when motor vehicles may drive on the forest. The Travel Management Rule does not require that the motor vehicle use map show information about skill level for off-highway vehicle use; further, skill levels may vary widely according to personal ability. Posting route number signs will supplement the information on the motor vehicle use map. Enforcement is a concern analyzed in detail in the draft environmental impact statement.

Seeking out additional funding will help the Forest Service with maintenance and enforcement.

*Response:* The Forest Service seeks additional funding when appropriate opportunities, such as grants, arise. We also intend to leverage our budget with volunteers. We will continue to work to supplement our budget where feasible. Funding levels are provided by Congress, and not within the Forest Service's control or ability to influence.

Decommissioning the routes not designated will ensure resource protection.

*Response:* The physical obliteration of routes is not part of this decision, which does not include any ground-disturbing activities. This project provides for a system of roads, trails, and areas open to motorized use. Routes that are not designated may be candidates for decommissioning. Their obliteration, because it is ground disturbing, would require a separate NEPA analysis.

Closing routes without providing physical deterrents will not be effective in preventing off-highway vehicle users from continuing to use closed routes and causing resource damage.

*Response:* Eliminating motorized cross-country travel will immediately benefit all natural and cultural resources. Eliminating motorized travel on approximately half of the Forest's routes will allow many roads to naturally revegetate, and many stream crossings to heal. Physical closures that

disturb ground require site-specific environmental analysis. The routes the Forest does not designate would be candidates for decommissioning in the future. This decision does not involve ground-disturbing activities. The Travel Management Rule continues to allow the Responsible Official to implement emergency closures if needed.

Forcing private landowners to maintain roads that are also open to the public places a heavy burden on private landowners.

*Response:* The Forest Service does not require private property owners to maintain Forest Service roads that cross their land and lead to other parts of the Forest. Roads that lead only to private property, however, are generally the responsibility of the landowner. Who maintains roads is beyond the scope of this project.

The motorized community provides volunteer maintenance work, and restricting their access to trails will prevent them from continuing to help maintain trails, which are also used by hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians.

*Response:* Volunteer efforts are essential to maintaining trails and easing the burden of the maintenance backlog. Even volunteer work, however, does not address the issues that the Travel Management Rule seeks to address. With a designated motorized system, volunteer efforts can be concentrated to needed areas and would allow for a better-maintained system. The Recreation Specialist Report analyzes the issue of trail maintenance in detail.

Using "Leave No Trace" principles in the travel management process will help keep the forest clean.

*Response:* The Forest Service has always supported *Leave No Trace* principles on national forests and the travel management process is no different. The Santa Fe National Forest actively encourages these principles, and will work to incorporate them during implementation.

Using the travel management process to educate the public will ensure that forest users understand the need to protect the forest.

*Response:* The Santa Fe National Forest believes that one of the major purposes of the travel management process is to educate the public about the changes the Travel Management Rule makes to the way motor vehicles are used on the forest. During implementation, the Forest plans to continue the education process with maps, publications, and information on our website, to name a few.

Having the motor vehicle use map available at all access points will ensure that the public is well informed and will help to enforce the designated system.

*Response:* Having the motor vehicle use map available at all forest access points would help inform the public, but it might be difficult to do. Even after the designation process, the forest may have several hundred access points. The Santa Fe National Forest will make the maps available at all ranger stations and at the supervisor's office. The map will be available on the internet. As we get closer to the final designation, we will examine ways and welcome other suggestions to help keep the public informed.

Maintaining OHV routes to the highest standard will negatively affect user satisfaction in regards to a quality experience.

*Response:* Forest personnel understand this statement to mean that motorized users would prefer to have some challenging trails to ride on, and that not doing maintenance lets a trail become challenging. Routes designated for motorized use will be maintained to the standards needed to protect natural and cultural resources. The Forest Service does not rate the difficulty of trails since that can be a highly subjective matter.

Meeting with separate groups individually will allow those groups to submit comments in a friendly environment and will give the forest useful information.

*Response:* The Santa Fe National Forest has encouraged public involvement in different ways, including meeting individually with different user groups at the Forest and District offices. Forest Service staff has met with any groups that wished to submit comments. Sometimes meeting in a group helps people understand other points of view. Forest staff continues to welcome the public's comments, in whatever manner they feel comfortable providing them.

Designing meetings that cause user groups to work together towards a compromise will create a motorized system that everyone can be happy with.

*Response:* The Santa Fe National Forest agrees that the design of public meetings can aid in finding mutually acceptable solutions. The Forest continues to welcome suggestions for improving its public involvement process.

To date, the Forest Service has not provided the public with accurate, complete information in a timely manner causing the public to wonder if the Forest Service is actually using public involvement as required by the NEPA process. Some of the methods the Forest Service used to inform the public and the way the Forest Service collected feedback were not effective.

*Response:* The Santa Fe National Forest will continue to do everything possible to ensure that the information released to the public is as accurate, timely, and complete as possible. We regret that some people have not been satisfied with the process to date, and we welcome suggestions for improvement.

#### *Not Supported by Scientific Evidence*

Once published on a map, designated roads and trails will be available nationally and will negatively affect the forest due to the increase of motorized recreationists from out of town.

*Response:* The Forest's interdisciplinary team recognizes the possibility of increased use on previously unmapped routes, but no studies documenting such an increase exist.

The reduction in miles of routes and the prohibition of cross-country travel as described in the proposed action is not justified. The adverse effects to forest resources are not scientifically based or field-verified and are over-estimated.

*Response:* The Forest Service has recognized unmanaged recreation, including the effects of unmanaged off-highway vehicles, as a major threat to national forests and grasslands. The Travel Management Rule was created to address this threat. The Santa Fe National Forest will use the best available science when analyzing the environmental effects of all alternatives.

The alternatives submitted by outside groups will either not provide enough protection of the forest, or not provide an adequate motorized system.

*Response:* The alternatives submitted by outside groups may or may not provide adequate protection for the forest or may or may not provide an adequate motorized route system, depending on one's perspective. The Forest's interdisciplinary team considered all the alternatives people submitted. Parts of these proposals may be reflected in the Santa Fe National Forest's range of alternatives.

Creating a motorized system that is equally dispersed across all districts will lessen negative effects to the forest, help prevent user-conflict, and provide a quality recreation experience.

*Response:* The Forest's interdisciplinary team developed Alternative 5 specifically to respond to the issue of user conflict. The quality of a recreational experience varies greatly by the person. Forest staff aimed to protect natural and cultural resources while providing adequate recreational opportunity. Doing so did not result in an equal amount of motorized use across the Forest. Some districts simply have more motorized use and fewer resource concerns than others.

The proposed forest plan amendments will negatively affect the forest.

*Response:* The Forest's interdisciplinary team will analyze the effects of the proposed amendments to the Forest Plan. The effects will be disclosed in the draft environmental impact statement and project record.

The closure dates in the Proposed Action were decided without public involvement or analysis and will cause negative effects to resources and motorized recreation.

*Response:* The Santa Fe National Forest engaged the public for two years before releasing the Proposed Action. The alternatives' seasonal dates reflect public and internal concerns brought up during scoping.

Using information on off-highway vehicle sales will not help the Forest Service come to a decision.

*Response:* Off-highway vehicle sales information may help the Forest Service make a decision under the Travel Management Rule. The Santa Fe National Forest staff uses information from many sources to help us arrive at the best possible decision.